

## **Collections Review Committee Annual Report, 2003**

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Members:

Dale Ogden, Chief Curator of Cultural History & Chair  
Lorri Dunwoody, Registrar & Recording Secretary  
Rex Garniewicz, Curator of Prehistoric Archaeology  
Link Ludington, Lanier Mansion S.H.S. Site Manager  
Ron Richards, Chief Curator of Natural History  
Colleen Smyth, Director of Education  
Todd Stockwell, Curator of Agriculture, Industry & Technology

Collections Review Committee (CRC) priorities for 2003 were to edit and re-write as necessary the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites (the division) Collections Management Policy (CMP) and to operate the committee as a peer review team for the division, continuing its evolution from a collections care advisor to the Historic Sites. The CRC largely succeeded in addressing these tasks and is well positioned to serve as a critical component within the division's function.

### **(I) Editing and Re-writing the Collections Management Policy**

In that the division's CMP had not been revised since 1991, and in that the division and the CRC had evolved significantly during the ensuing years, the division's senior management directed the committee to make revising the CMP a central priority. To that end, the existent CMP was distributed to the committee and preliminary edits to the document were drafted in October 2002. At that time, Lorri Jacobs (registrar) was named to replace Linda Badger (chief collections manager) on the CRC and was asked by the chair to serve as recording secretary.

In November 2002, sub-committees were appointed and charged with revising specific sub-sections of the CMP as follows:

- "Access & Use of Collections" (curator of historic archeology, chief cataloger, distance learning coordinator)
- "Artifact Reproduction and Replication Policy" (manager of *Tomorrow's Indiana*, curator of geology, curator of social history, photographer and Lanier Mansion SHS site manager)
- "Incoming Loan" and "Outgoing Loan" policies (registrar and curator of furnishings)
- "Conservation Policy" (chief conservator, textile conservator, textile technician and objects technician)

Additionally, cultural and natural history curators revised “Collecting Strategies” for their respective sections. CRC was responsible for crafting an “Introduction and Overview” to the CMP, “Governance of Collections Policies and Procedures,” and “Acquisition & Deaccession Policy” and drafted a new tiering system for classifying objects within the division’s collections. CRC and the director of collections and interpretation consolidated and edited the various sub-committee reports. The director of collections and interpretation adjusted the “Movement of Collections, Loans and Other Materials” and the “Ethics and Conflict of Interest” policies. After several revisions the updated CMP was forwarded to senior administration in March 2003 to be submitted to the museum’s board of trustees for approval. Adjustments to the tiering system continued to be made throughout April with trustees adopting the revised CMP at their May session.

Major modifications to the division’s object acquisition policies and procedures in the CMP include:

- “All acquisitions must be approved by the CRC”
- “No purchase of objects intended for the collections may be made without pre-approval by the CRC [which] allocates all acquisition funds...”
- “Anyone may recommend that an object be acquired for the collections, but the request must be directed through the appropriate curator in the collections and interpretation section”
- “In rare instances, the CRC may undertake an emergency approval procedure at the request of a staff member” (a detailed description of authorized procedures then follows)
- COLLECTION TIERING

A tiering system for the classification of all objects brought into the division’s collection was created. Maximizing the use of an institution’s collection for exhibit, educational, marketing and public programming purposes while at the same time fulfilling the organization’s mission to preserve historic objects in perpetuity is an ongoing issue in the museum field. In an attempt to resolve this conundrum, the curator of agriculture, industry and technology, with the assistance of the curator of furnishings and others, researched several respected institutions to see how they address the dilemma. Ultimately, the CRC determined to incorporate some aspects of collecting classifications used by the Henry Ford and Glenbow museums, while modifying others to suit the division’s unique circumstances.

In brief, the CRC established descriptions and storage, treatment, documentation, handling and other guidelines for four distinct classifications of objects. Heritage Levels 1 and 2 objects essentially meet the traditional division requisites for accessioned objects. Interpretive Level 3 sets principles for reference objects, whereas the Registered Level allows for consistent acquisition, tracking and utilization of reproductions and like objects. The goal of this structure is to establish coherent standards for the broad use of division's collection while allowing for the acquisition of other objects necessary to the division's functions. Following this framework should also preclude any inclination to develop ghost collections that are sometimes built to circumvent a museum's policies as they relate to the use of objects.

Following procedures set forth in the revised CMP; all presenters of acquisition proposals to the CRC have been making recommendations as to the appropriate tier for relevant objects since the approval of the document by division trustees. Responsibility for the ultimate classification of all acquisitions rests within the CRC, which has been assigning appropriate tiers since that approval.

Major modifications to the division's object deaccession policies and procedures in the CMP include:

- "Only a curator may present an object to the CRC for removal from the collections"
- "In consultation with the registrar or one of the collections managers, the appropriate curator will complete a deaccessions form" (a detailed description of authorized procedures then follows)
- Of special note is the disposition section of the policy. Allowing the division to dispose of valuable but inappropriate objects from the collection while returning any realized resources from the transaction to the division's acquisition fund remains a principal issue facing the committee. The CRC will continue to review options with the division vice-president of human resources and finance and other representatives of senior administration. The division has suggested amendments to the legislation codifying the disposition of historic property. The 2004 General Assembly has not acted on the legislation at the time of this report.

The CMP separated archaeological collecting strategies from natural history, identifying archaeology as a distinct section equivalent to the cultural and natural history sections.

Individual collecting areas, e.g. “Americana,” “Petrology,” “Historic Archaeology,” etc. were extensively modified from previous classifications of curatorial responsibility.

An “Outgoing Loan Policy” that subjects the loan of any collection object to review and approval by the CRC, requiring conservation proposals be submitted to CRC review based on the tier classification of the object, and an adjusted fee schedule that matches the use of division-owned images with prevailing industry standards were also newly incorporated into the document.

## **(II) Reorganizing and Operating the CRC**

Although a reconstituted CRC began meeting in early 2002, there was much confusion, within the committee and throughout the division, as to what its specific role was to be. The committee’s mandate, the mechanics of its operation and the extent of its authority was discussed internally and with various members of the division’s senior administration throughout the second half of 2002. It was determined that these questions would be best addressed through the approval of a revised Collections Management Policy, production of which was thus made the committee’s first priority.

Pending adoption of a revised CMP, the CRC continued to review acquisition and deaccession proposals on a case-by-case basis consistent with procedures the committee had been developing since its reorganization. The committee also began following certain policy and procedural guidelines, such as instituting an object tiering system, de facto, pending approval of the new CMP. A major acquisition of Gene Stratton-Porter books that upgraded previous holdings, an expansion of the Golden Troupe collection, deaccession and transfer of the Sanford-Clannin WWII oral history collection to the Indiana Historical Society, addressing restricted-gift issues surrounding the proposed Griffin (Corydon SHS) donation, and the deaccession and transfer of objects to the Jones House as a final step in the division’s deaccession of that historic property are examples of major business conducted in this fashion during the first quarter of 2003.

Upon the division trustees’ approving the revised CMP in May 2003, the CRC proceeded aggressively, continuing to meet the last Tuesday of every month to review issues related to the CMP, and to field acquisition and deaccession proposals presented by curators, education specialists and historic site managers. In addition to conducting monthly acquisition and deaccession reviews, various members of the CRC conducted three staff seminars on new policies set forth in the CMP and new procedures the CRC was thereby authorized to implement. The first class was held in June for all SHS site managers. Like sessions for the division’s education, collections and interpretation, and communications sections followed. In the fall of 2003, the Indiana Historical Society requested a copy of the revised CMP as a reference for their efforts to reconstruct that organization’s collecting policies and procedures. The document was forwarded and

communications between the two organizations to clarify and standardize their respective functions are ongoing.

A general report on acquisitions and deaccessions follows this narrative. A sampling of specific acquisitions the committee approved during 2003 would include:

- Crawfordsville Crinoid Slab
- Prairie Creek paleontological/archaeological collection
- Assorted collections of Indianapolis Public School #5 memorabilia
- Robert Brindza collection of Indiana labor badges, c. 1900
- Parachute silk wedding dress
- Assorted purchases from Cowan Historic Americana auctioneers
- Portrait of Iron Brigade general, Solomon Meredith by and itinerant
- Iron lung, c. 1950 from the Vigo County Hospital
- Sequence collection of boy-to-man clothing ca. 1945-1975

Procedures for submitting and reviewing “emergency acquisition proposals” (rather than requiring a curator to await regularly scheduled reviews) such as for auction items or other objects that may be at immediate risk were developed and refined by the CRC throughout 2003. The final committee session of the year, held in December, was dedicated exclusively to reviewing deaccession proposals. The CRC is aware of the potential problems that can arise if an aggressive acquisition effort is not complimented with a professionally conducted and ethical culling strategy. It is expected that the realization of an authoritative deaccessioning plan will remain a key CRC priority throughout 2004.

Looking to the new year, the CRC is faced with several challenges, and with many opportunities. Pursuing constructive strategies for retaining resources realized through the deaccessioning and disposal of objects presents both extraordinary opportunity and extreme risk. With regard to the historic sites, resolving matters alluded to above that arose prior to the complete installation of CMP policies and procedures is critical to the division’s health. Continuing the effort to refine collecting relationships between the division and other collegial institutions such as the Indiana Historical Society will be vital in upgrading our collection.

Perhaps the most basic challenge facing the committee in 2004 is simply continuing the process of making CRC activities increasingly familiar and accepted by division staff. As personnel increasingly accept committee procedures as outlined by the CMP, the day-to-day functioning of this essential committee should become increasingly capable. The overall operation of the division will therefore become increasingly efficient as well.

### **(III) Final Notes**

The CRC was reconstituted as a true peer review committee that would be constantly renewed with fresh ideas and perspectives. To that end, chief curator of natural history, Ron Richards, and chief curator of cultural history and CRC chair, Dale Ogden, completed their terms on the committee and were replaced by curator of geology, Peggy Fisherkeller, and curator of fine arts, Rachel Perry, respectively. The director of collections and interpretation, pursuant to the revised CMP and in consultation with the chief curators, appointed Fisherkeller and Perry to the 2004 CRC. Curator of prehistoric archaeology, Rex Garniewicz, has been elected by the committee to serve as incoming chair for 2004.

Submitted January 21, 2003 by Dale Ogden, CRC Outgoing Chairperson

## REGISTRAR'S REPORT ON CRC ACTIVITIES FOR 2003

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### Acquisitions - Regular

Proposals Presented	Proposals Approved	Number of Presenters	Number of Objects	Amount of Purchases
161	140	18	1,162	\$26,749

### Acquisitions - Emergency

Proposals Presented	Proposals Approved	Number of Presenters	Number of Objects	Amount of Purchases
9*	5	5	5	\$16,785

\* 2 withdrawn

### Deaccessions

Proposals Presented	Proposals Approved	Number of Presenters	Number of Objects	
19	19	10	303	

Number of Lots
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6
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### Loans - Incoming

Active Loans	Institutions	Individuals
109	50	59

### Loans - Outgoing

Active Loans	Institutions	Individuals
11	11	

Submitted January 21, 2003 by Lorri Dunwoody, Registrar